



# **UIL News is good news**

UIL News Writing  
Alyssa Boehringer, UIL Journalism Director

# News Writing

Gives the reader information – starting with the most recent information/events. It flows from most important to least important.



A person is reading a newspaper. The newspaper has several headlines and images. The top right headline reads "NORTHWEST How coronavirus upended youth — and what they say they need". Below it, there is a photo of a dog. To the left, there is a headline "One of Democrats' chief antagonists to return to Congress" with a photo of a man. Further down, there is a "BLACK LIVES MATTER" sign. At the bottom, there is a headline "Ni Una Más: Seeking justice for femicide in Mexico through poetry, journalism and art" with a photo of a person. The text "What is news? It is information only." is overlaid in large white font across the center of the image.

**"What is news?  
It is information only."**

// Walter Cronkite //

# News stories are...

01

## **Objective**

Anything that is not an absolute fact must have attribution.

02

## **In Third Person and Active Voice**

He. She. They. Them.  
Use strong, active verbs.

03

## **Short Paragraphs**

Paragraphs in all journalistic writing are one or two sentences.

04

## **Accurate, Timely and Concise**

The most current and accurate information in as few words as possible.

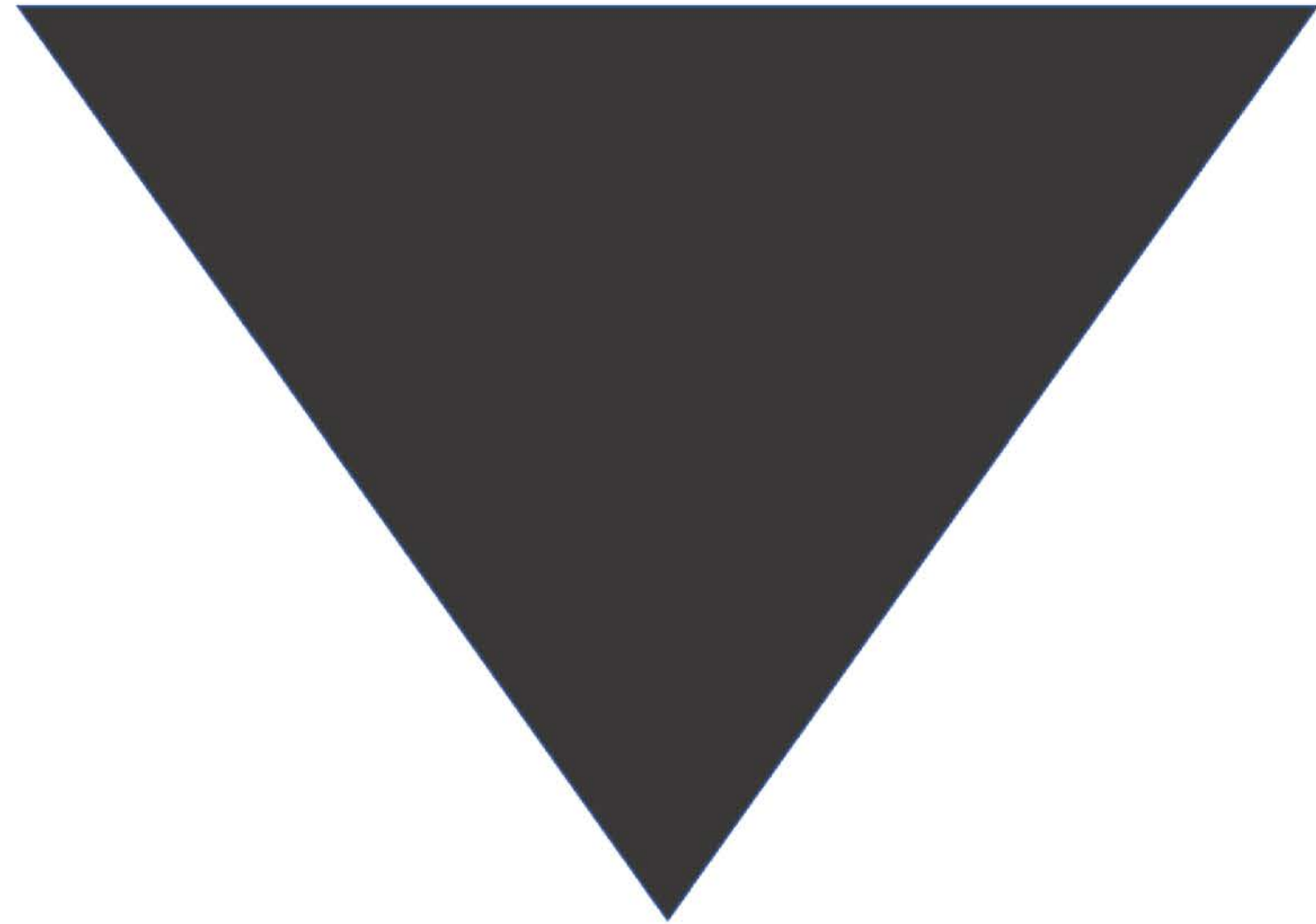
05

## **Written in LQTQ formular**

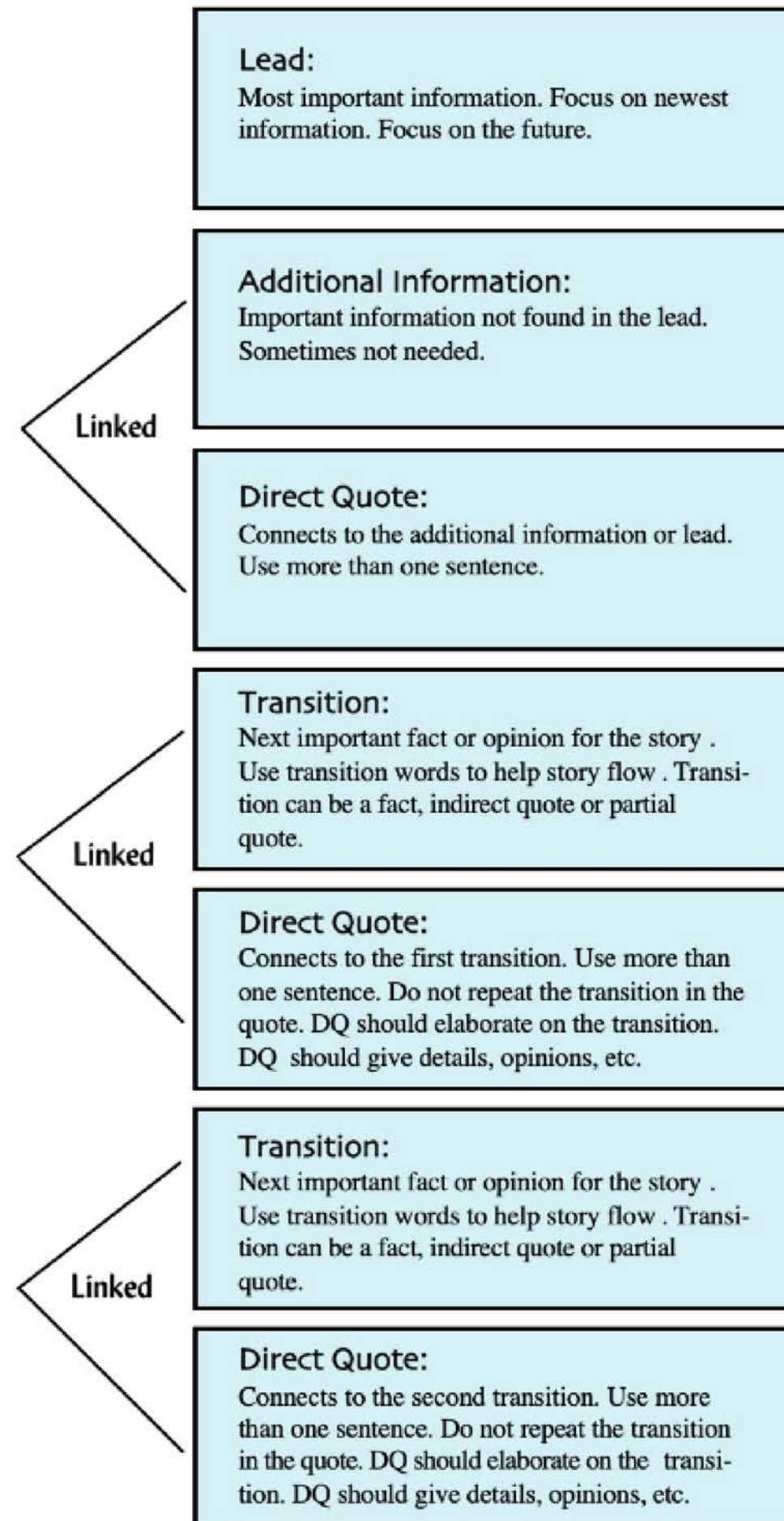
Lead, quote, transition, quote.

# Inverted pyramid

Most important information comes first



# Transition/Quote Formula



**Side Notes:**  
1) Each box is a new a paragraph.  
2) Story should flow from most important to least important information.

and so on... until the story is complete



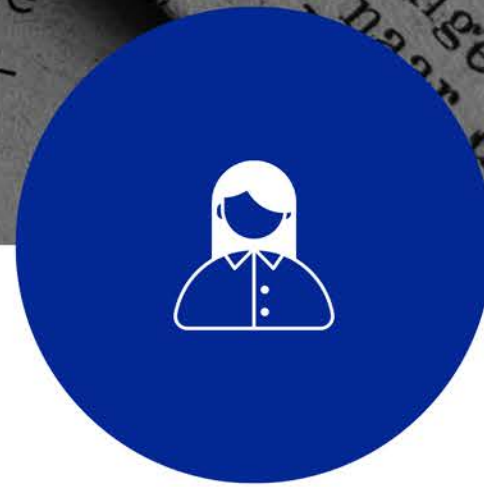
**Let's talk  
about leads.**

# Leads...



**The most important information.**

Think about your audience.



**The most current information.**

The stuff the reader already knows shouldn't be in the lead.



**Focused on what will happen in the future.**

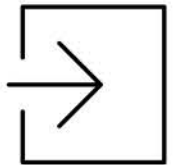
Look for the future event.



# Types of leads



**WHO**  
Probably not.



**WHAT**  
Yes.



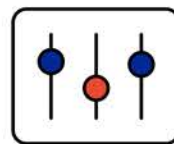
**WHEN**  
Probably not.



**WHERE**  
Probably not.



**WHY**  
Yes.



**HOW**  
Yes.

# The Who

Probably won't work

Avoid leading with the name of a boring school employee. If you start with the who, they better be someone special.

**Principal Joe Blow announced Tuesday that students will no longer be allowed to leave campus for lunch.**

# The Who

Only in certain circumstances.

**Actor Chris Hemsworth, who plays Thor in the Marvel movies, will visit the high school Thursday and speak to students about being a “real-life superhero.”**

Who leads could also be acceptable when talking about a group.

**Students will no longer be able to leave campus for lunch after Principal Joe Blow announced a new policy Tuesday.**

# The When

Probably won't work

Don't start with the time element.

**NO:**

**On Tuesday, Principal Joe Blow announced students will no longer be able to leave campus for lunch.**

**STILL NO:**

**Starting Thursday, students will no longer be able to leave campus for lunch.**

# The Where

Probably won't work

No one cares about the school board meeting.

## **NO:**

**At the school board meeting, Principal Joe Blow announced that the school will no longer off-campus lunch.**

## **MAYBE:**

**In the principal's office, the senior class built a mini go-cart to protest the cancellation of student parking on campus.**

**The What**

**The Why**

**The How**

These work.

# Leads that work.

**If a group of parents can't change Principal John Roberts' mind about his ban on the 2019 class shirts, seniors say they might wear the shirts to school Friday, an act that could get them suspended.**

# Leads that work.

**After driving a sick student to an urgent care clinic in his personal car, varsity football coach Ned Winter faces possible termination for violating district policy.**



# Leads that work.

**After four car accidents last month, Principal Stan Lebowski announced Friday that seniors will not be able to leave campus during lunch.**

# Writing a Lead

## Read the prompt.

- Find the newest information in the prompt
- Beware of older or more controversial news
- Write one or two sentences summarizing the “new” news including as many of the other W’s and the H’s as possible
  - Avoid the who, where and when
- Keep it in third person, concise and to-the-point
- No need to mention the word Leaguetown
- Do not editorialize



# News Writing

District Meet • 2023



You are a reporter for the **Leaguetown Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School.

From the given information, write a **news story** as you would for the high school newspaper. You may use statements attributed to individuals as **direct or indirect quotes**. You may not change the meaning of a statement. You have **45 minutes**.

Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or your entry. **Put your number on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School has 5,100 students enrolled in grades 9-12.

On Dec. 16, the Basketball Booster Club hosted a faculty vs. student basketball game as a fundraiser. Teachers and coaches played against players from both the girls and boys varsity basketball teams.

At the game, which was held during the school day, several students sneaked into the arena to fight other students in attendance. After a physical altercation went on for a few minutes in the top of the bleachers, officials had to stop the basketball game and send all students back to class for the last 30 minutes of the school day because of safety concerns.

No students or adults were seriously injured during the altercation at the game, and students who participated in the fight were all identified by school administrators and received discipline in accordance with the student code of conduct. Several videos of the incident were posted to TikTok by students present. One recording received more than 2 million views over the next few weeks. Law enforcement used the videos as part of their investigation.

After videos circulated on social media following the incident, Principal Raul Jimenez proposed an amendment to the student code of conduct wherein students who record violence, such as fighting, on campus on their phones would receive mandatory placement for 30 days at the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program campus.

The school board will vote on the proposal at their meeting Monday, March 27. You are writing for an issue of the Press to be distributed Friday, March 24.

## ■ RAUL JIMENEZ, principal

“Students do not understand the damage being done when they record fighting, bullying or any type of violence on their phones. I know the impact TikTok has had on our culture for young people. I see that desire to get attention through views, likes, shares and clicks. But the act of recording violence and posting it for millions of people to see not only encourages further fighting and violence, but it also puts people in the video at risk. Those videos will live on the internet for years to come, and in a few short years, people involved will apply for colleges and for jobs. Having that content on the internet can put our students’ futures at risk.

“We have had a policy against filming fights for years where students who do so would receive in-school suspension for one day. In many recent incidents, including the fight at our basketball game, students recording these physical altercations have interfered with teachers, administrators and law enforcement attempting to intervene. With this new proposal, those who violate the rule by recording fights on campus will receive the same disciplinary result as the students involved in the fight. They’ll be placed at

■ **RAUL JIMENEZ, principal (continued)**

DAEP for a minimum of 30 days.

“While there, students will receive work from their teachers to complete. They also will be suspended from all UIL activities and will not be allowed on their home campus for any school activities until the conclusion of that disciplinary placement.

“Our hope is that this change in policy will not only prevent students from recording fights but will also prevent the fights themselves. Our number-one priority is to keep students safe, and if this policy change can make students safer, then this is what we should do.”

■ **HANNAH McMAHON, senior**

“Students feel safe fighting and doing things on campus that they wouldn’t do on the street. I guess going to DAEP is better for them than going to jail, so lots of fights happen here that wouldn’t happen outside of school. We have fights in the hall at least every couple of weeks. People will run toward the same place in the hall with their phones out, and that’s how you know there’s a fight. You’ll see multiple angles of a fight go viral on TikTok before it gets taken down.”

■ **CHRIS SMITH, school resource officer**

“Sometimes we see a physical event start to unfold, but we can’t get to it to stop it quickly. Being in a school is different than being a patrol officer. I can’t throw bystanders out of the way. These are kids. We need this proposal to move forward to help police and administrators get immediate access to the parties involved in an altercation and to keep everyone safe. If bystanders know they can get in trouble for filming, hopefully they will stay out of the way. It’s not worth it to go viral.”

■ **MARCELLUS WHEATON, English teacher**

“When something happens in the hall, we can’t get to it to help because everybody is recording. It doesn’t even have to be a fight. A student falls down and other students gather around taking pictures and video instead of helping. Students shouldn’t act like this. They shouldn’t be fighting, and when people film it, we see more fights in the next few days, so it is more and more disruptive to the school. The halls are so full already, and it makes it dangerous for the rest of us.”

■ **ROY RICHMOND, sophomore**

“How can they stop students from recording in a public space and then punish them for doing it? It sounds like a First Amendment violation to me. People are going to fight sometimes, and nowadays people, especially teens, record everything. I get the school wants to keep us safe, but this is too much.”

■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The student code of conduct already prohibits “recording in any way that disrupts the educational environment or invades the privacy of others,” and “behaving in any way that disrupts the school environment or the educational process.”

**What is essential  
for this lead?**

# Solid lead.

**A new amendment to the student code of conduct, proposed by Principal Raul Jimenez, would send students who record violence on campus to the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program campus for a minimum of 30 days. The school board will vote on the proposal at its meeting on March 27.**

# Solid lead.

**Students who record violence on campus could be sent to the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program for 30 days if the school board approves Principal Raul Jimenez's proposal at its March 27 meeting.**



**Let's talk  
about direct  
quotes.**



**Find the people who  
matter to this story.**

**Students!**

# Quotes...



## Can be more than one sentence.

They don't have to be, but it helps with flow.



## Should have attribution after the first sentence.

Noun then verb.  
Title name said.  
(Always use said.)



## Do not stack quotes.

Use a transition between direct quotes.

# Direct Quotes

Should not repeat the transition/lead  
that came before them.

**School resource office Chris Smith said this could encourage others to record fights in an attempt to go viral, which can make a fight difficult to stop.**

**“Recording fights encourages others to record fights in an attempt to go viral,” Smith said. “I can’t throw bystanders out of the way. These are kids.”**

# Direct Quotes

Should be linked from the paragraph before them. The quote should elaborate on the previous paragraph.

**Sophomore Roy Richmond said he has concerns about the new policy violating students' First Amendment rights.**

**“How can they stop students from recording in a public space and then punish them for doing it?” he said. “People are going to fight sometimes, and nowadays people, especially teens, record everything.”**

# Attribution!

"This is how attribution should look in a direct quote," UIL Journalism Director Alyssa Boehringer said. "In this contest, punctuation is important. Writers should always use 'said' as the verb in the attribution."

# Lead and first quote

Students who record violence on campus could be sent to the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program for 30 days if the school board approves Principal Raul Jimenez's proposal at its March 27 meeting.

The amendment is in response to a fight that broke out during the faculty vs. student basketball game Dec. 16, resulting in a video of the fight going viral on TikTok.

“We have had a policy against filming fights for years where students who do so would receive in-school suspension for one day,” Jimenez said. “With this new proposal, those who violate the rule by recording fights on campus will receive the same disciplinary result as the students involved in the fight.”

# First transition

During the basketball game, several students sneaked into the arena to fight with other students. After a fight broke out in the stands, officials stopped the game and students were sent back to class for the remaining 30 minutes of the school day.

# Direct quote

“Students feel safe fighting and doing things on campus that they wouldn’t do on the street,” senior Hannah McMahon said. “Going to DAEP is better for them than going to jail, so lots of fights happen here that wouldn’t happen outside of school.”



**Let's talk  
about  
transitions.**



# Transitions...



## Super important.

They hold the story together.



## Link the paragraphs.

Your transitions is where you can show your thought process. It creates flow.



## A fact or an indirect quote.

Opinions go in quotes.  
Facts go in transitions.

# Fact Transitions

Facts can be found in the situation or in one of the quotes.

**Several videos of the incident were posted on TikTok, one of which received more than 2 million views.**

# Indirect Quote Transitions

Make sure not to include this tidbit in a direct quote later on.

**School resource office Chris Smith said this could encourage others to record fights in an attempt to go viral, which can make a fight difficult to stop.**

# Transitional Words

They'll help your story flow.

- **After all**
- **Also**
- **Finally**
- **In addition**
- **However**
- **Otherwise**
- **Then**
  
- **Beware of indefinite terms leading your transitions**
  - **Many**
  - **Some**
  - **Most**
  - **These are weak!**

# Transitions

Where to find them.

- **Use parts of direct quotes and information to create the transition**
- **Facts go in transitions. Opinions go in direct quotes.**

# Transitions

Example

**ROY RICHMOND, sophomore**  
“How can they stop students from recording in a public space and then punish them for doing it? **It sounds like a First Amendment violation to me.** People are going to fight sometimes, and nowadays people, especially teens, record everything. I get the school wants to keep us safe, but this is too much.”

**Transition:**

**Sophomore Roy Richmond said he has concerns about the new policy violating students’ First Amendment rights.**

**Do not copy lead or  
transitions word-for-  
word from the prompt!**



**Let's talk  
about the  
ending.**



# The ending...



## End with a strong quote.

Save one of your strongest summary quotes. This is the **kicker quote**.



## Tie it up with a bow.

Choose a quote that will wrap up the story nicely.



## Always end with a quote.

Do not come up with your own ending.

# The Ending

Always end with a strong quote.

**“Our hope is that this change in policy will not only prevent students from recording fights, but will also prevent the fights themselves,” Jimenez said. “Our number-one priority is to keep students safe, and if this policy change can make kids safer, then this is what we should do.”**

**Let's review.**

**How should you avoid  
starting your lead?**

**What is attribution?**

**Who should you always have  
a quote from?**

**Where should you get ideas  
for transitions?**

**What is one "must have" for  
your lead?**



# Final Checklist

- Are the most important and most recent facts first? Future event!
- Is the story accurate? Are sources identified fully?
- Are the paragraphs short? 1–2 sentences
- Is the sentence structure varied in the story?
- Is the story neat and double–spaced so it's easy for the judges to read.
- Does the story flow?
- Did you use active voice?
- LQTQ?

# Make your judges happy:

- Don't use the word "Leaguetown." Students know where they go.
- Don't write a feature lead instead of a news lead.
- Don't make up stuff that's not in the prompt.
- Don't editorialize. Keep your opinion out of the story.
- Keep it in 3rd person. Common mistake: "our school..."
- Avoid messy handwriting, poor grammar and spelling errors
- Paragraphs are 1–2 sentences.
- Don't misspell names. It's right there in the prompt.
- Don't try to use all the information in the prompt.
- Don't stack quotes.
- Don't forget to quote students.
- Don't use indefinite terms (many, some).

**OK, but how do I win?**

**Lead with the  
future event.**

**Use LQTTQ formula.**

**Use the best quotes.**

**Get the quote  
attribution right.**

**Tell a *story* that flows.**



A large crowd of people, mostly young adults, is seated in bleachers at what appears to be a school event or graduation. In the foreground, a close-up of a woman with brown hair and glasses is visible. The background shows a large, well-lit indoor arena with many rows of people.

# Happy writing!

Contact me any time.  
[aboehringer@uiltexas.org](mailto:aboehringer@uiltexas.org)